British Columbia Provincial AIDS Strategy

DRAFT DISCUSSION PAPER

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Ministry of Health
Honourable John Jansen, Minister

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This document has been developed to facilitate consultation and provide a framework for coordinated and cooperative action concerning AIDS in British Columbia.

The goals of the Provincial AIDS Strategy are to prevent the further spread of AIDS/HIV+ in British Columbia, to provide persons with HIV infection and AIDS appropriate treatment and support; and to contribute to the national and worldwide efforts to control AIDS/HIV+.

The Province of British Columbia recognizes the following principles concerning AIDS/HIV+:

- AIDS/HIV+ is a serious, communicable disease which the Government is committed to addressing through a comprehensive program encompassing a broad range of social, legal and human rights issues.
- The approach of the Provincial Government must complement national and local AIDS/HIV+ strategies.
- AIDS/HIV+ is more than a public health problem, and therefore requires a cooperative approach with other ministries of government, other levels of government, community based agencies, and universities and hospitals.
- The success of local community and advocacy organizations in being able to reach specific high risk and target groups and to contribute to the development of effective strategies is ackowledged and supported.
- Public attitudes, perceptions and concerns respecting AIDS/HIV+, and the nature of the disease, require special attention to such issues as reconciling the protection of individual rights with the greater public interest.

NOTE: A brief glossary of terminology is appended.

The Government will continue to address, in consultation with interested parties, specific areas of concern such as:

- AIDS/HIV+ and the gay community
- Rights of AIDS/HIV+ persons
- Education/prevention for students
- Housing and social assistance for persons with AIDS/HIV+
- AIDS/HIV+ and prison inmates and workers
- AIDS/HIV+ in the workplace
- Intravenous drug users and AIDS/HIV+
- AIDS/HIV+ and Native people
- Compensation issues for hemophiliacs and users of HIV-infected blood products
- Multi-cultural language issues

The overriding approach of the Government's strategy with respect to AIDS/HIV+ lies in coordination of activities, consultation and support of interested organizations. The Government will continue to coordinate its activities among affected ministries, as well as with other levels of government and public agencies. Ongoing consultation will occur with professional interests and advocacy groups associated with the AIDS/HIV+ problem, and support will be provided to organizations which are effectively meeting the challenge of AIDS/HIV+.

Elements of the Government's strategy can be organized into three key areas of attention: 1) Education and Prevention; 2) Treatment and Related Issues; 3) Research.

The objectives, current programs and activities, and strategic goals associated with each of these three general areas are explained herein.

1. Education and Prevention

OBJECTIVES FOR EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

- to provide ready access to HIV testing and counselling, particularly for high risk and special target groups
- to aim for early diagnosis of HIV+ in order to reduce the potential for spread of AIDS/HIV+
- to increase public awareness of the nature and transmission of AIDS/HIV+, and of protective measures which can be taken to avoid it
- to educate high risk and special target groups, and groups with special educational needs (e.g., those with visual and hearing impairment and communication problems, who are not a "risk" or "target" group in terms of infection, but need to be informed), respecting transmission and preventive measures which they can take
- to maintain public confidence and cooperation in addressing this disease
- update and support health care workers and others working with AIDS/HIV+ individuals

CURRENT PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES IN EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

- ongoing public awareness and publications campaigns
- BC AIDS line
- testing and counselling
- special events: World AIDS Day, national and international conferences
- Native AIDS/HIV+ awareness project
- education materials designed for some high-risk and special target groups: "AIDS in the Workplace", "Living with AIDS" manual, correctional officers and inmates education
- a mandatory annual 10-hour program for every student in grades 7–10, and a minimum 4-hour program for every student in grades 11–12 is in place, with resource materials specific to each grade level available in all schools
- development of information on AIDS/HIV+ for inclusion in the later intermediate and school graduation years as part of a comprehensive health guidance program ("Learning for Living Program")
- education and guidance to government staff and caregivers who may be in contact with high risk groups, concerning personal safety, sensitivity to the issues relating to AIDS/HIV+, provision of information and support to those at risk, and ensuring testing and special arrangements if appropriate
- providing background material to media
- B.C. Provincial Advisory Committee on AIDS as a professional reference group
- outreach services for IV drug users and street youth
- video and printed information for staff and inmates of correctional institutions
- project funding for community-based groups
- consultation with advocacy and support groups
- through the Red Cross and hospitals, screening of blood products and organs for donation
- "Be Responsible For Life" public campaign

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

- ensure the continued accuracy of HIV laboratory results through centralized testing services
- fund local governments and public agencies to develop and implement education/prevention programs aimed at high risk and special target groups
- expand the street nurse/counsellor program
- support for federal/provincial demonstration program concerning prevention of AIDS/HIV+ by intravenous drug users
- develop a comprehensive AIDS education strategy which would include an appropriate application and use of the B.C. Youth and AIDS video in coordination with local and national youth education initiatives
- provide comprehensive preventive education for students in schools and post-secondary institutions
- provide preventive education for inmates and prison workers
- support community initiatives which foster alliances with high risk groups, in recognition of their effectiveness in prevention and education
- encourage the development of community advisory groups at the local level to assist local governments with education and prevention
- improve public understanding respecting the means and risks of transmission of AIDS/HIV+
- provide AIDS/HIV+ education and support to women and families
- improve public understanding of the Province's strategy and programs to address AIDS/HIV+
- cooperate with the federal government, municipal health departments and drug and alcohol addiction programs to prevent the spread of AIDS among intravenous drug users
- coordinate preventive programs for Native people with the Native Coordinator of the Federal Centre for AIDS and the Native Health Promotion Society, providing prevention and education programs both on and off reserves
- strengthen the B.C. Centre for Disease Control as a provincial resource centre for education, prevention, testing, epidemiology, and research
- enlist assistance from the media in disseminating up-to-date information on AIDS/HIV+

2. Treatment and Related Issues

OBJECTIVES FOR TREATMENT AND RELATED ISSUES

- to provide AIDS/HIV+ persons access to appropriate treatment services
- to make appropriate drug therapies accessible to persons with AIDS/HIV+
- to provide access to home care and residential care services for persons with AIDS/HIV+
- to ensure the protection of rights of people with AIDS/HIV+
- to assist HIV infected persons to deal with non-medical issues such as housing and employment

CURRENT PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES IN TREATMENT AND RELATED ISSUES

- provision of AZT through hospitals/Pharmacare
- outpatient clinic, home care support and palliative care
- High Risk Dental Clinic
- Infectious Disease Clinic (St. Paul's Hospital)
- National Coordinating Centre for the HIV Clinical Trials Network (UBC/St. Paul's Hospital)
- Provincial Advisory Committee on AIDS
- AIDS is considered a "physical disability" under the **Human Rights Act** by a 1988 decision
- The British Columbia Council of Human Rights participates on a federal/provincial committee which is working to produce a report on human rights issues associated with AIDS/HIV+
- Council of Human Rights staff participate on a federal/provincial committee on Medical and Legal Rights, which is currently working on the issues of human rights associated with HIV testing
- Government Personnel Management policies protecting employees with AIDS/HIV+

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR TREATMENT AND RELATED ISSUES

- make AZT and other specialized drugs for the treatment of AIDS/HIV+ available when Health and Welfare Canada has approved them
- support the use of experimental drugs within the context of formal evaluation protocols
- seek the advice of the Special Advisory Committee on Ethical Issues in Health Care, the Council of Human Rights, and others on issues surrounding HIV reporting and liability
- foster the development of support networks at the local level for persons with AIDS/HIV+
- develop a community based approach to the treatment of AIDS, utilizing home care and mutual support in conjunction with families and local organizations
- supply physicians with research information and education concerning treatments for AIDS/HIV+
- strive to ensure adequate health care manpower to deal with AIDS/HIV+

3. Research

OBJECTIVES FOR RESEARCH

- to continue to monitor AIDS/HIV+ infection through surveillance, surveys and epidemiological studies
- to encourage health care and academic institutions to:
  - participate in the international effort to develop a vaccine and/or find a cure for AIDS/HIV+
  - develop protocols to ensure optimal clinical management of the disease and cost-effectiveness of care
  - provide insight into means of communicating with high risk and special target groups in order to influence their behaviours
  - assess the particular needs of individual target groups
  - support regular surveys of knowledge, attitudes and behaviour concerning AIDS/HIV+
- to collaborate with the Federal Centre for AIDS as well as other provincial governments to share research findings and coordinate research priorities
- to draw on the benefits of research in other jurisdictions, and cooperate where possible in these research efforts
- to maximize the amount of Federal and other research funding flowing to AIDS/HIV+ related research in British Columbia
- to evaluate effectiveness of care and treatment strategies
- to participate in the international effort to control AIDS/HIV+

CURRENT PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES IN RESEARCH

- quarterly analysis of the AIDS/HIV+ situation in British Columbia
- risk group surveys and needs assessments
- biomedical research
- clinical drug trials (St. Paul's Hospital)
- participation in national and international studies on AIDS/HIV+
- funding or performing British Columbia surveys of specific issues or groups; evaluation of education programs

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR RESEARCH

- develop a center of excellence in British Columbia for the treatment of AIDS/HIV+ and other viral diseases
- conduct further needs assessment studies for special target groups to make education and prevention strategies more effective
- encourage the evaluation of treatment and prevention strategies for AIDS/HIV+

Appendix

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AIDS

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome – a state of disease resulting from the body's immune system being compromised by infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

HIV+

The state of being infected with the human immunodeficiency virus. Although symptoms of disease may be absent for an extended period of time, possibly many years, the individual is infectious and can spread this virus to others. HIV+ is a necessary precursor to AIDS. The virus can only be spread through direct exchange of body fluids – blood, semen and vaginal fluids.

HIGH-RISK GROUPS

Groups of individuals who are at particularly high risk of contracting AIDS/HIV+. These include intravenous drug users, homosexual and bisexual males, prostitutes, street kids, hemophiliacs, and infants born to women with AIDS/HIV+.

SPECIAL TARGET GROUPS

Groups of individuals on whom particular attention should be focussed to provide appropriate educational and preventive programs for AIDS/HIV+. These include people with special education needs, Natives, women, youth, inmates and workers in correctional institutions, the disabled, people in the workplace, and health care workers and others who may expect to come in contact with infected persons.

MANDATES OF BRITISH COLUMBIA MINISTRIES RESPECTING AIDS/HIV+

MINISTRY	SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITY
Attorney General	legal issues
Advanced Education	education/prevention programs for post-secondary students
Education	education/prevention programs for students in K-12
Finance and Corporate Relations	funding approval, Federal/ Provincial cost-sharing
Government Management Services	AIDS/HIV+ and the public service workplace/ employment
Health	education/prevention, treatment and research
Labour and Consumer Services	Human Rights issues, drug abuse, prevention and treatment programs, AIDS and the Workplace (WCB)
Native Affairs	Coordination of Native issues, liaison
Social Services and Housing	Housing issues and income assistance
Solicitor General	AIDS/HIV+ and the prison population